

Message Text

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SUBJ: SOVIET TRAVEL TO WESTERN COUNTRIES, 1971-1973

1. AT MEETING OF WESTERN CONSULS IN MOSCOW AUG 16, (REGULAR BI-MONTHLY MEETING AT THIS EMBASSY) QUESTION WAS ASKED WHETHER SOVIET GOVERNMENT EXIT CONTROLS OVER PRIVATE TOURISM AND VISITS TO RELATIVES IN WEST ON PART OSVIET CITIZENS HAVE BEEN EASED IN RECENT YEARS. ATTENDING CONSULS, REPRESENTING ON THIS OCCASION NINE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PLUS AUSTRALIA AND CANADA, SEEMED TO AGREE UNANIMOUSLY THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT LIBERALIZATION AND THAT COUNTRY -BY-COUNTRY FIGURES SHOWING VISA ISSUANCE TO SOVIET CITIZENS IN PAST TWO-THREE YEARS WOULD CONFIRM THIS FACT.

2. REVIEW OF VISA FIGURES PROVIDED US IN CONFIDENCE IN RECENT MONTHS BY TEN WESTERN CONSULS IN MOSCOW SUPPORTS THIS IMPRESSION. ALTHOUGH NO EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE TYPE OF DATA PROVIDED BY EACH COUNTRY CORRESPONDS EACTLY (DATA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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USUALLY DESCRIBED AS NUMBER OF VISAS, TRANSIT OR ENTRY OR BOTH, ISSUED TO BEARERS SOVIET REGULAR PASSPORTS), WE BELIEVE CHANGES IN NUMBER OF ISSUANCES BY EACH COUNTRY OVER RECENT PERIOD AS WELL AS PERCENTAGE CHANGE BETWEEN

TOTAL 1971 AND TOTAL 1972 FOR ALL COUNTRIES ARE WORTH CITING.

3. FOLLOWING FOUR EMBASSIES SHOWED INCREASES IN NUMBER VISAS ISSUED TO SOVIET BEARERS REGULAR PASSPORTS FROM 1971 TO 1972 (AND OTHERWISE WERE NOTED); CANADA, 500 TO 578 (BUT ONLY 154 IN FIRST FIVE MONTHS THIS YEAR); DENMARK, 407 TO 447; FINLAND, 11,327 TO 12,352 (AND FIRST FOUR MONTHS THIS YEAR, 4,340); ITALY, 8,751 TO 12,534 (AND FIRST SIX MONTHS THIS YEAR, 5,043.).

4. FOLLOWING FIVE EMBASSIES SHOWED DECLINE IN NUMBER VISAS ISSUED TO SOVIET BEARERS REGULAR PASSPORTS FROM 1971 TO 1972 (AND OTHERWISE WHERE NOTED): AUSTRALIA, 566 TO 401 (AND 243 FIRST FIVE MONTHS 1973); BELGIUM (INCLUDING DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL SOVIET PASSPORTS), 5,077 TO 5,034; GREAT BRITAIN, 588 TO 512 (AND 90 FIRST FOUR MONTHS 1973); NETHERLANDS (DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL SOVIET PASSPORTS ALSO INCLUDED), 3,727 TO 3,612 (AND 1,054 FIRST FOUR MONTHS 1973); SWEDEN, 727 TO 252 (AND ONLY 45 FIRST FIVE MONTHS 1973). IN ADDITION, SWISS CONSUL PROVIDED 1970, 1972 AND SIX MONTHS 1973 FIGURES SHOWING 692, 1,013 AND 279 ISSUANCES, RESPECTIVELY.

5. US EMBASSY ISSUED 1,015 VISAS IN 1971 AND 969 IN 1972 TO SOVIET BEARERS OF REGULAR PASSPORTS TRAVELING TO US FOR PRIVATE VISITS TO RELATIVES OR (IN ONLY A FEW CASES) FRIENDS. IN FIRST SEVEN MONTHS OF 1973, WE HAVE ISSUED 544 SUCH VISAS.

6. IN TERMS OF GROSS PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1971 TO 1972 FOR ALL REPORTING COUNTRIES ISSUANCES (INCLUDING US AND EXCLUDING SWITZERLAND), THERE IS INCREASE OF ABOUT 12 PER CENT. RISE IN SOVIET TRAVEL TO ITALY IN 1972 MAINLY ACCOUNTS FOR THIS INCREASE, WHICH IS LARGELY ATTRIBUTABLE IN OPINION ITALIAN CONSUL TO CALLS BY SEVERAL SOVIET CRUISE SHIPS TO ITALIAN PORTS IN 1972. EXCLUDING ITALIAN FIGURES ALTOGETHER, IS IS ESTIMATED SOVIET AUTOHIREES GRANTED ABOUT 1 PER CENT MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REGULAR FOREIGN PASSPORTS IN 1972 FOR PRIVATE/TOURIST TRAVEL TO THESE COUNTRIES THAN IN 1971.

7. COMMENT: ABOVE EXERCISE IS USEFUL IN LENDING SUPPORT TO WIDESPREAD, IMPRESSION, ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT TO PROVE, THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY EASED THEIR EXIT CONTROLS OVER PRIVATE/ TOURIST TRAVEL TO WESTERN COUNTRIES. IT APPEARS IN PARTICULAR THAT DESPITE FAVORABLE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS OF PAST YEAR THERE HAS BEEN NO NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN SUCH TRAVEL THUS FAR IN 1973. DUBS

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